



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 December 2021

by H Miles BA(hons), MA, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21 DECEMBER 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/L3625/W/21/3273796

1-3 High Street, Reigate RH2 9AA

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr R Leech against the decision of Reigate and Banstead Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20/02587/F, dated 20 November 2020, was refused by notice dated 17 March 2021.
 - The development proposed is addition of a further floor above the existing first floor, and the use of the area as residential accommodation.
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Decision

1. This appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area with particular respect to:
 - Whether or not the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Reigate Conservation Area,
 - The setting of nearby Grade II listed 5 High Street
 - The non-designated heritage asset 1-3 High Street

Reasons

3. 1-3 High Street is a locally listed building. Its significance derives from its historic commercial use with a traditional shopfront on an important corner location. Prior to 1951 a three storey building stood on this site. The evidence shows that to the High Street frontage the height, openings and detailing to the first and second storeys were the same, with a generous roof including two dormer windows. Fenestration and detailing to the side elevation resulted in a secondary appearance to Bell Street. Nevertheless, the decrease in height in the early 1950s would have had a limited effect on the building's features of significance. Consequently, it presently has a modest degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, although it has no statutory protection.
4. The appeal site is also within the Reigate Conservation Area (CA) which appears to derive its significance, as a whole, from the historic layout and buildings associated with a traditional market settlement, encompassing the vibrant town centre. The main commercial streets including High Street and Bell Street are characterised by a mixture of traditional styles and detailing

with business uses directly onto the street. This variety contributes to a lively, interesting streetscene. Properties in this area are generally two or three stories with a group of buildings on the same side of the road as the appeal site at the top of Bell Street that are two storeys. This broad consistency results in appropriate relationships between nearby properties and makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the CA.

5. The appeal site is on the corner of High Street and Bell Street, a prominent position on a busy junction in this town centre. It is two storeys, complementing the height of the adjoining properties along Bell Street. It makes a positive contribution to the significance of the CA in terms of its historic commercial use and arrangement with a ground floor shopfront and secondary upper floor, as well as its appropriate visual relationship with neighbouring properties.
6. The adjoining building at 5 High Street is a Grade II listed c17th building with 18th, 19th and 20th century additions. It is listed for its external and interior historic appearance and detailing. Given the close functional and visual relationship, 1-3 High Street forms part of its setting. The visual prominence of 5 High Street relative to the appeal site means that the significant external features of the listed building are prominent in public views. Consequently, the appeal site forms a positive part of the setting of this listed building.
7. The proposed additions would significantly increase the height of the host building. The resultant development would have a prominent elevation to Bell Street and a marked increase in height along Bell Street. This would be harmful to the relationship between the appeal site and the adjoining property. The proposed development would also result in 1-3 High Street being taller and consequently more visually conspicuous than 5 High Street. It would therefore undermine the prominence of the listed building and its significant features in public views and would also harm features which make a positive contribution to the CA. Furthermore, these effects would be highly conspicuous due to the fact that the appeal site is in such a prominent corner location.
8. The proposed development would not result in the direct loss of the use or historic details on the non-designated heritage asset. However, there would be a resultant effect in that the extended building would be inappropriate in the streetscene and therefore the historic significance of the locally listed building would be experienced as part of this undermined context.
9. The proposed development seeks to reinstate the three storey building that previously existed. However, the proportions of the second floor and roof have been altered and the windows and detailing to the Bell Street frontage would not result in a secondary elevation. Consequently, the proposed development would not restore the historic appearance of the property in this location and would not reinstate any previously existing relationships.
10. It appears to me that the historic Old Town Hall serves as a focal point to the area around the junction with Bell Street, Church Street and High Street, and it seems that this would have been the case even with the host property in its original three storey form. Nor am I persuaded that the proposed development would create an appropriate second focal point in this location. Whilst other corner plots in this area have three storey buildings these are different in terms of their relationship with neighbouring dwellings and prominence. Therefore, I do not agree that this is necessarily something to be replicated on this site.

11. There was a previous application on this site for a taller building¹. However, it can be seen above that, even with the reduced height proposed I do not find that the proposed building would be appropriate to the character and appearance of the area.
12. Consequently, taking all the above into account, the proposed development would be notably harmful to the character and appearance of the CA and the setting of the listed building and would have a limited effect on the modest significance of the locally listed building. Therefore, in this respect, it would be contrary to Policies DES1 and NHE9 of the Reigate and Banstead Local Plan Development Management Plan September 2019 which require that development should be of a high quality design and should protect, preserve and enhance the Borough's heritage assets, amongst other things.

Heritage Balance

13. The National Planning Policy Framework July 2021 (the Framework) advises that heritage assets are irreplaceable and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance and that any harm requires clear and convincing justification. In terms of the Framework the harm to the CA and 5 High Street would be less than substantial. Nevertheless, this is a matter of considerable weight and importance. It goes on to require that any harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the scheme.
14. The proposed development would provide the social and economic benefits associated with the provision of one new dwelling. It would use the airspace above the commercial premises and would be an efficient use of previously developed land in a highly accessible location. However, given the size of the proposed development these benefits would be limited in their scale. It would also replace the flat roof which currently requires repair and maintenance. However reduced upkeep is mainly a private benefit.
15. On the other hand, having regard to my statutory duty I am required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA and special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of the listed building or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
16. Accordingly, the limited public benefits would not outweigh the harm to the designated heritage assets to which I attach considerable weight and importance. This leads me to conclude that the proposal is unacceptable.

Conclusion

17. The proposal would not accord with the development plan and there are no other considerations, including the provisions of the Framework, to indicate that the appeal should be determined otherwise. Therefore, for the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

H Miles

INSPECTOR

¹ 19/00964/F